



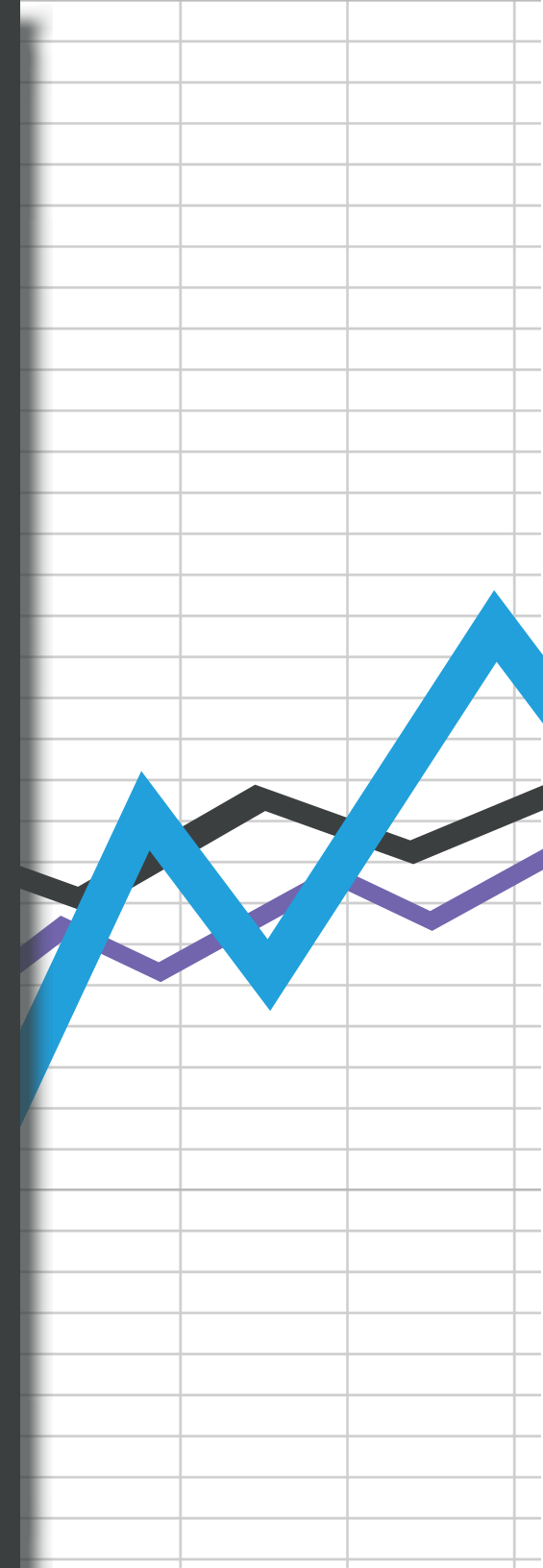
How to Create **MARKETING REPORTS**

*Your Boss Actually
Cares About*

*WITHOUT SPENDING YOUR
ENTIRE WEEK IN EXCEL*

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Why Marketing Reports Matter

Have you ever heard the quote “**Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.**”? Reports and analysis are a business’ way of learning history. Without looking at what you have done, you can not know what worked and what did not.

How about this one - “**Without data, you’re just another person with an opinion.**” You will always have opinions that are fueled by experience (helpful) and emotion (not so helpful) in the room. With data, you still have the experience and emotion, but you also have cold, hard, numbers.

Last quote - “**I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that don’t work.**” Data allows you to test things quickly. If you can access granular data, you can see successes and failures before they impact higher level metrics. If you test something and are (a) able to identify quickly that it doesn’t work and (b) change that test, it’s not a failure — it’s a learning.

Introduction



What Marketing Reports Can Do For You

Reports help you make better, more informed decisions - which is both good for your company and good for your growth. As far as proving one's value goes, **there aren't many things that are more compelling than tying your effort to revenue**. Proving that your team is making a positive impact on the business helps you rationalize the need for your team's work.

Speaking of spend: being able to prove the ROI (return on investment) of your program is ideal. **If you can tie cost to eventual profit**, you're going to be a very popular employee. This will also help you advocate for more budget in upcoming quarters.

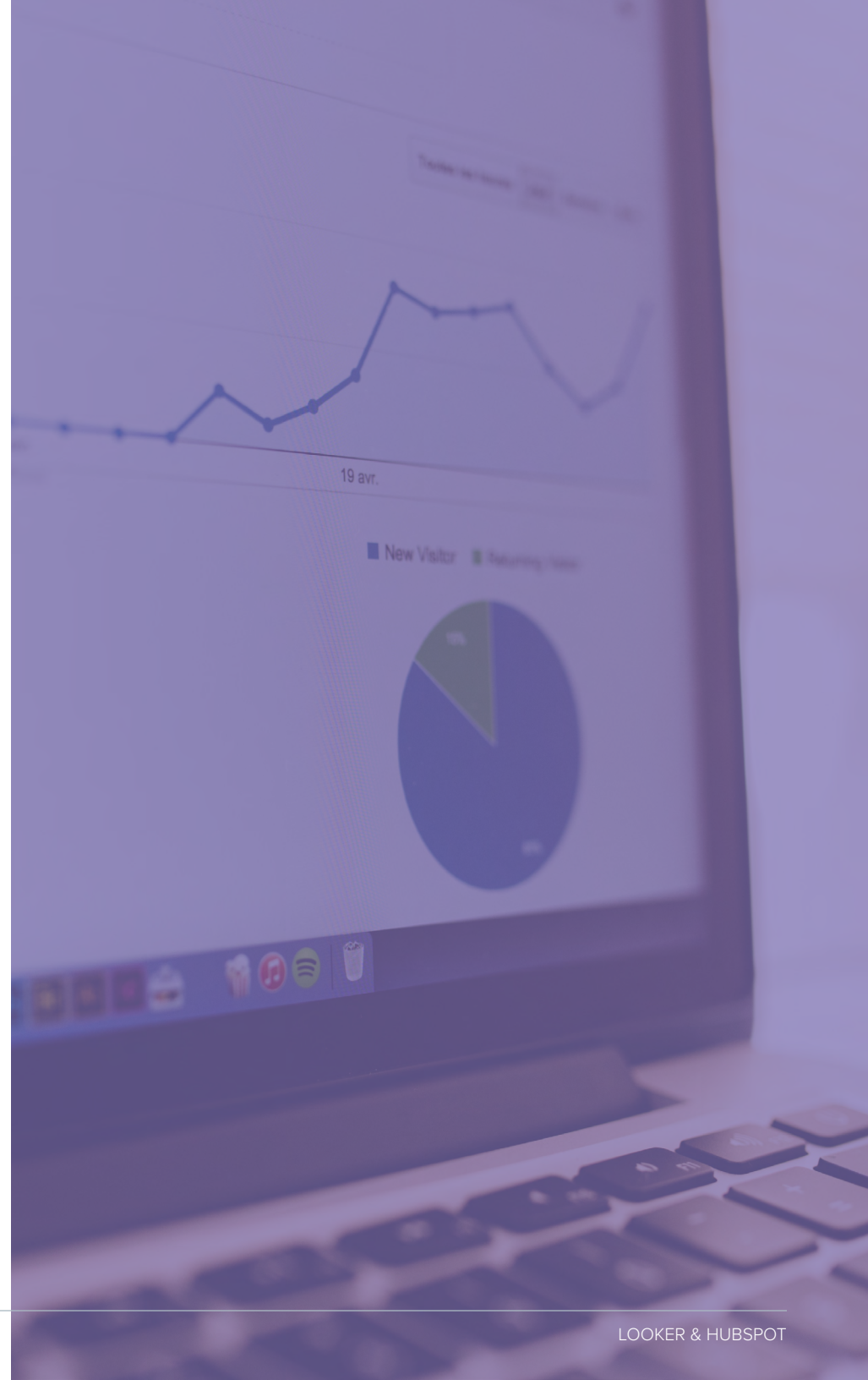
It's important to remember that analysis doesn't have to just happen at the end of a project. Keeping tabs on where you are during the month or the quarter is critical to hitting goals.

The more granular, the better.

Being data-driven makes you look good. Use data as a sounding board before you talk to your boss. “What if we talked about x instead of y? Have we talked about either of them before? Did that work? Let’s look at the data!” Walking into a meeting and being able to back your opinion up with data when someone asks, “but why?” makes you a credible source of reliable data to make informed decisions, thus improving the decision making process and bettering the company.

Marketing reports are also simply good motivators. **It’s important to feel like the time you spend working on programs and campaigns has a real impact on the business.** Even if you work for a large company, being able to point to a meeting or a sale that was driven by your work is incredibly powerful.

All the data we talk about in this ebook is geared towards reporting, but it’s good to keep in mind that data’s value is not limited to reporting. If your company can set up numerical indicators that mean trouble, there are tools that can send alerts to the proper people that will allow you to correct problems immediately.



CHAPTER 2:

What to Measure

Before you can start putting a report together, you have to understand what you're measuring and how you're measuring it. **Here are 10 simple ways to measure your work:**

1. **Attempts** - How many times did someone try to do something?
2. **Impressions** - How often do people see something?
3. **Successes** - How many times did people successfully do that thing?
4. **Conversions** - What percentage of people who did X progressed to Y?
5. **People** - How many different people did something?
6. **Totals** - What was today's total revenue/total time on site/total net profit?
7. **Averages of things that vary** - What was the average/median/mode number/time of this thing?
8. **Quality** - How many people used X and how many tried to use X but failed?
9. **Quality Ratios** - What percentage of the people who tried to do X had issues?
10. **Against basic dimensions** - You can combine two pieces of data to answer a more specific question. For example, How many orders were placed today by people between 16 and 25? What about between 26 and 35?



Data, Metrics, and Analysis

The terms, data, metrics, and analysis are often used interchangeably. But the reality is that understanding the differences can help you make an amazing report.

Data is the raw numbers that you pull. For example, you might know that you had 90k visitors to your site in March. But what does that actually mean in context? 90k sounds like a lot of people, but maybe you had 200k visitors 9 months ago.

Instead, that data needs to be put into context through a **metric** like month-over-month web traffic.

The last piece of a report is the analysis of your data and metrics. Your **analysis** is the pairing of additional metrics and data for comparison and interpretation. For example, the addition of the bounce rate or percent change to your month-over-month web traffic helps you analyze and interpret your metrics.

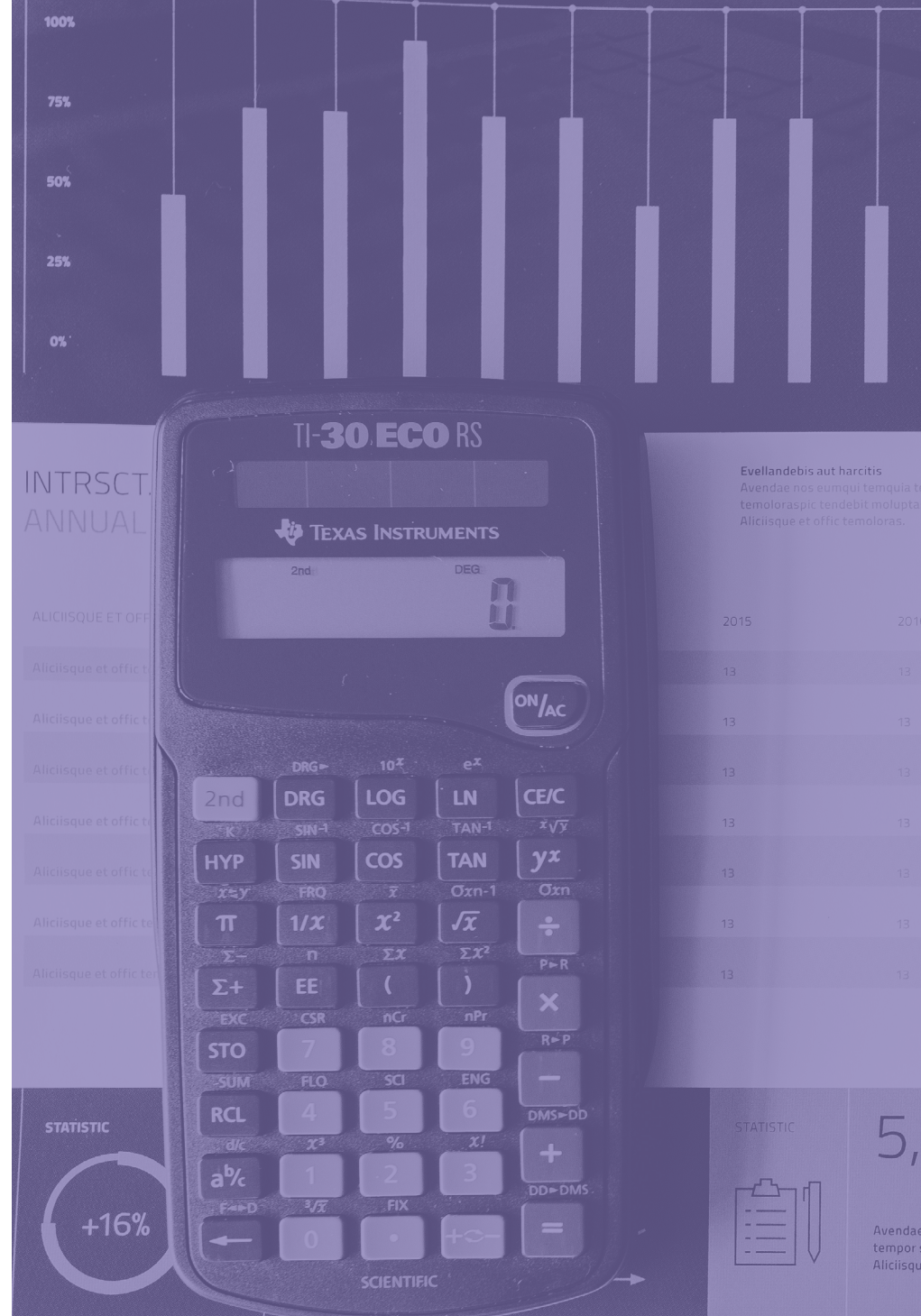
This is how these confusing terms are defined:

Data: The fact. The single number or single report. Not terribly useful alone.

Metrics: Data in context. Defined set of data points together. More useful.

Analysis: Metrics compared and interpreted in context. What you really want.

The best reports will have a combination of all three. At the end of the day, it is still important to know how many people visited your site. But, to make sure you are set up for data-driven success, you need more than just data, you need attribution.





Attribution

As marketers, you've probably heard the buzzword, "**attribution**." When creating your marketing report, you'll likely want to give your colleagues a picture of which marketing efforts are actually paying off.

The most basic way to think about attribution is as the way to measure the relative contribution of multiple actions (campaigns) to influence your final outcome (a conversion). It's as simple as your marketing strategy is — so probably not that simple. Depending on your business model, people may take any number of actions before they get to their eventual conversion.

It's also worth mentioning that different attribution models favor different programs in different ways. Creating an attribution model is challenging at best but we think it's important for you to understand a few of the most common types and why you would choose to use them.

FIRST TOUCH:

This method of attribution assigns 100% of the credit to the first campaign somebody was associated with. Any campaign after that is ignored.

- **Pros:** It's a good choice if you have limited analytical capabilities and/or are focused on net new names. It is easy to implement, easy to understand, and a lot better than nothing.
- **Cons:** You're only getting one piece of the picture. This is even worse in businesses with longer sales cycles. If you don't have any data after the first touch, it is nearly impossible to know what action ultimately resulted in conversion and this limits the levers you can pull to increase your conversion rate.

LAST TOUCH:

This method of attribution assigns 100% of the credit to the campaign that directly preceded the conversion. No credit is given to the source of the lead if they do not convert at the same time.

- **Pros:** Easy to implement. Really strong for re-engaging existing databases.
- **Cons:** Can bias your efforts towards people who already know about you, which might work well for a while, but you may also need to sell to brand new customers, too.





MULTI TOUCH:

Muti-touch attribution spreads credit among all campaigns. Since we are now dividing the credit, there are multiple ways to do it. The most common are Linear and Weighted.

LINEAR DISTRIBUTION:

Linear distribution gives every campaign equal credit for conversions. If they touched 4 campaigns, each one would get 25% of the credit.

WEIGHTED DISTRIBUTION:

Weighted distribution, assigns value to different stages of campaign touches. There are two ways to do this:

Time Decay - Assumes that as you get closer to the conversion, the campaigns are having more and more effect. It will discount the effect of the early campaigns and give more credit to later campaigns.

Position Based - You decide what rank of campaigns should be assigned the most credit. The most common implementation of this assigns 40% of the credit to the first campaign and 40% of the credit to the last campaign. Everything in the middle splits the remaining 20%.

Of course, there are many possible variations on the above common patterns.

When choosing which attribution method is right for you, think about how each model will bias your programs and the kinds of programs that you will need to invest in to make your numbers go up. Make sure you pick one that is in-line with your marketing strategy.

We recommend linear multi-touch for most cases because it's broad enough that you can see the whole picture and simple enough that you should be able to implement it without a huge amount of effort.



CHAPTER 3:

Knowing the Goals of your Report

When creating a report, the very first question you need to ask yourself is, “Do I need this report?”

While it sounds simple, it’s a question you want to make sure to answer before you start down the long and sometimes winding road of making a new report. To answer this question, we recommend thinking about the following three things:

1. WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH IT?

If the answer to this question does not immediately fly to the tip of your tongue, you probably don’t need this report. The top reasons to create a report are to:

- **Report on something that has wrapped up** - measure success or failure.
- **Report on something that is in progress** - decide if you need to tweak your approach.
- **Report on past performance of similar tactics before you start a new tactic** - what worked, what didn’t, how can we use those findings.

2. WHAT QUESTION(S) AM I TRYING TO ANSWER?

A great report combines multiple pieces of data to answer a broader question. Instead of asking, “How many people have registered for my event” you want to think about the bigger picture: “Am I on track to hit my registration goal?” This larger question allows you to look at your question from multiple angles and give a fuller picture of the situation.

We will come back to this question often in this guide, as it’s your key mission statement behind building a stellar report.

3. IS THERE AN EXISTING REPORT THAT I CAN USE TO ANSWER MY QUESTION?

As marketers, we have learned to reduce, reuse and recycle anything possible. Can we turn this blog into a white paper? What about a webinar? The same principles hold true for reports. Why create something new if someone has already done the work? If you can’t find something that answers your question completely, you still might be able to find a report you can use as a jumping off point.





What question am I trying to answer & who is asking?

Let's continue with our example of a report on registration for an event, like a user conference.

In this example, we decided the question we're trying to answer is: "Am I on track to hit my registration goal?"

What do we need to know to answer this question? We probably want a count of how many tickets are spoken for, how many open tickets we have left, and how much time is left.

Next we'll want to look at types of tickets being sold. Registration could be going great if you're giving them all away, but if your goal is to bring in revenue, just showing the number of tickets taken won't give you a complete picture. Of the tickets that are spoken for, find out how many have been sold at full price, early bird pricing, customer/VIP pricing, etc. and how many have been given away.

Of those comped tickets, how many of them were for customers, how many were for prospects and how many were for "other" (think press and partners)? Finally, what's the dollar amount that goes with each of those?

Digging into the tickets you have left requires understanding your original ticket allocation.

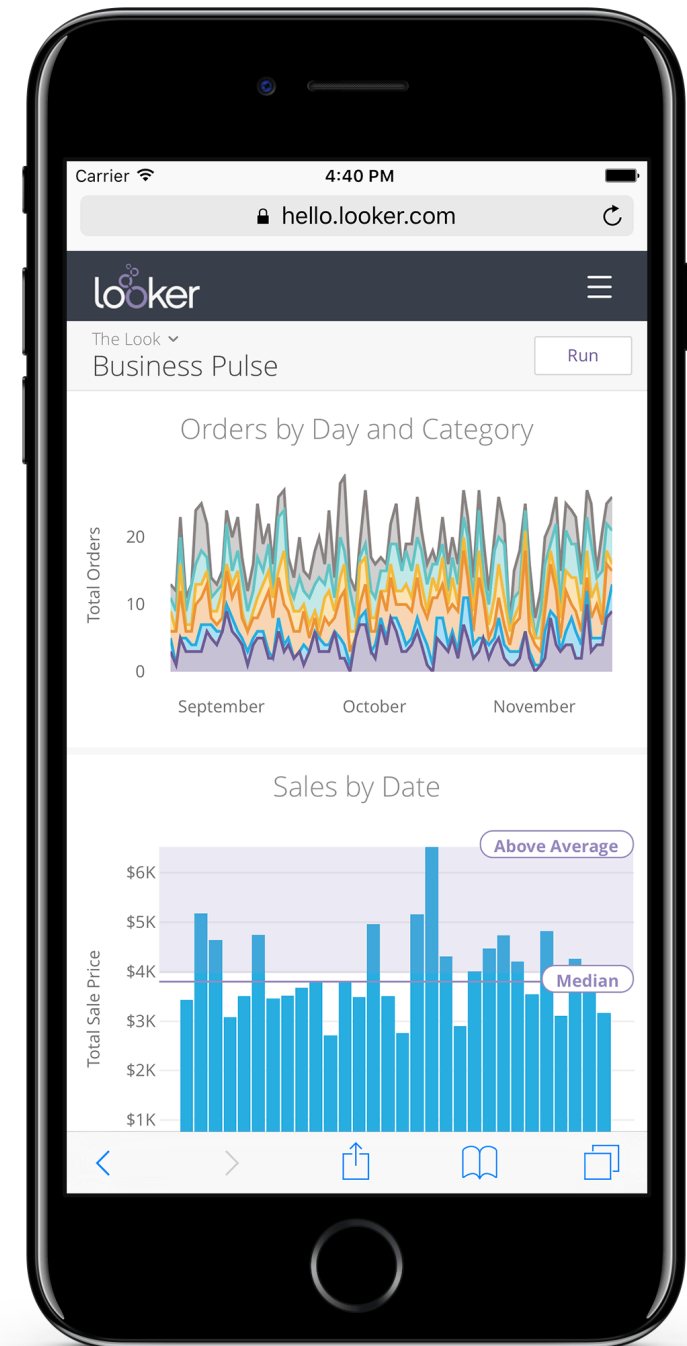
At the outset you probably told each team they were allowed x tickets to hand out at their discretion. If they have given away any tickets, both of you need to know that they only have x-y tickets left.

As you move beyond the key numbers, it is important to remember who your audience is. While you, as the event planner, know that there are 23 days and 4 hours until the event, your boss may not. Including reference points like “days before event” or “tickets allocated for sales” will give report readers a fuller understanding of what is going on.

Now, let’s move beyond the basic numbers. If we’re talking about overall registration, we’re also probably talking about how the promotion of the event is impacting registration. This conference is in New York. Have you been wasting your time allocating promotional resources west of the Mississippi? What channels are working well? Can you put more money into the ones that are performing at a higher rate?

As you get better at reporting, you’ll start to realize that every answer inspires new questions. Putting together a report that can fully answer the overarching question, while still being digestible, is difficult.

Our rule of thumb is that any information in a report should (a) be useful to more than 1 person and (b) inform actual decisions.



CHAPTER 4:

How to Find the Data You Need

We've talked about a lot of possible data so far and while it would be great if finding all of the data was simple and easy, that's often not the case. This chapter will cover a few things you can do to make sure you have all the data you need.

Collection

In general, the more data you have, the better. But it's not just data quantity that matters; data quality matters, too. Here are a few best practices for making sure you have the data you need to create your report:

1. TRACK EVERYTHING

It's hard to remember to put tracking in place. Creating assets and campaigns is often tedious enough on its own without adding the complication of trying to track it. Without fail though, we always kick ourselves any time we skip this step. Every email, webinar, white paper, and social media campaign should be tracked with as much detail as possible. If we missed something on that list, track it too. Trust us, it's worth it.

Pro Tip: You can create URL's that store all sorts of information in them. Everything from where a person came from to what link they clicked on in an email can be added!

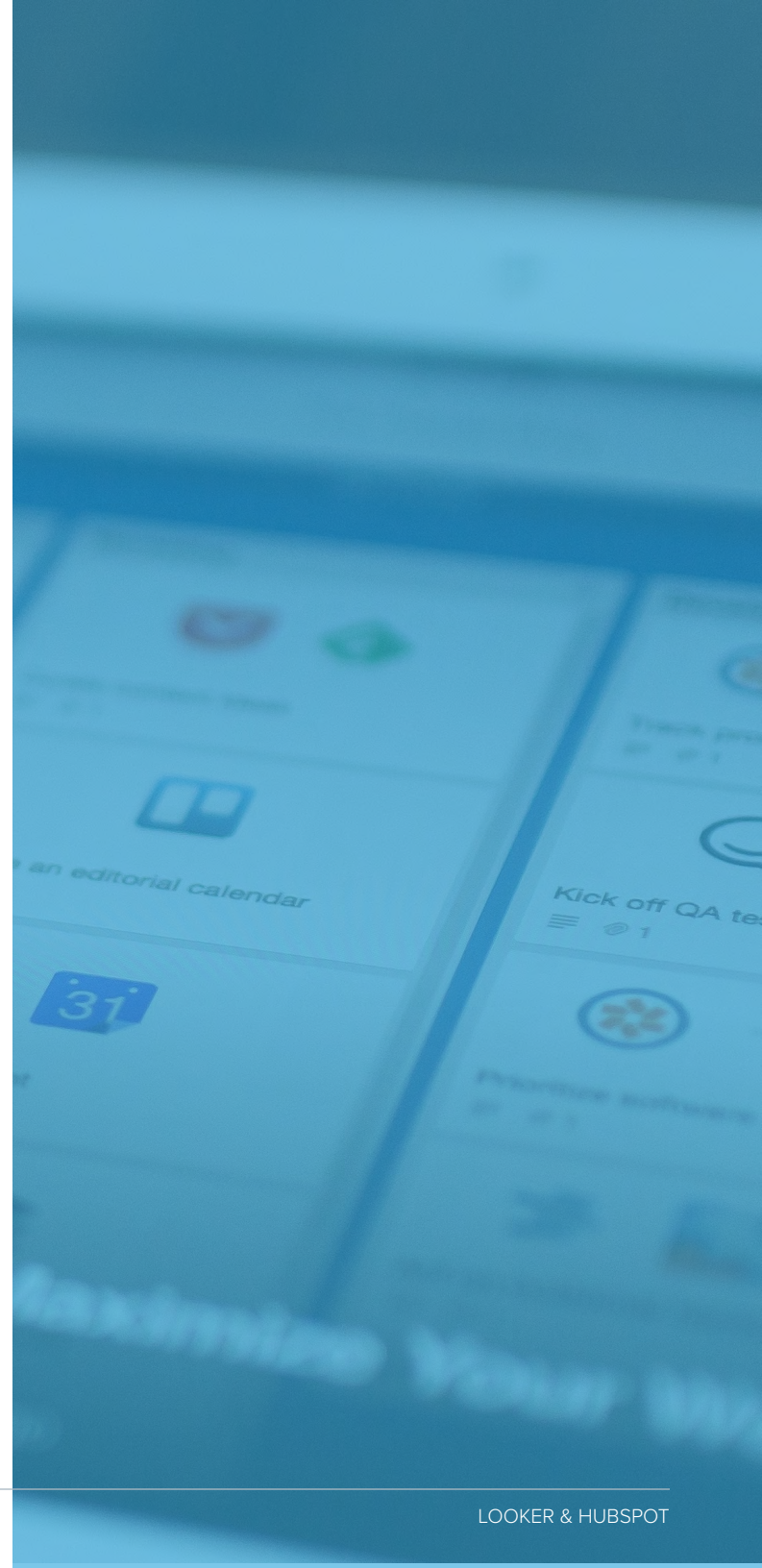
2. CREATE BEST-PRACTICES

Now that you're starting to track all marketing activities where conversions and data points can happen, let's now talk about how that's actually done. Keeping information in different systems will result in a lengthier and less accurate analysis. If you can't find a campaign or can't get detail on a campaign, your analysis will be incomplete. Make sure you define how you are going to track everything and keep an internal document outlining your business's processing for tracking to make these best-practices accessible and scalable throughout your organization.

3. TEACH AND ENFORCE BEST-PRACTICES

Tell people what the best-practices are and require them to adhere to them. Here are a few things that will help you:

- **Document, document, document.** When companies are small, word of mouth is a great way to share knowledge. Unfortunately, it doesn't scale. If you have a process for tracking (or really any process at all), document it and put that documentation in a central location.
- **Automate anything and everything you can for tracking.** The less people have to do, the more likely it is that they will report on the efforts accurately and often.
- **Forms and drop-down menus are your friend.** You need to tell people what information you need from them (form) and give them limited options (drop-downs). While I may call something a Live Webinar, someone else may just call it a webinar. With a drop-down, that discrepancy is not possible.





Centralization

This is not a problem that marketing teams are generally in charge of, but it's still worth mentioning. Pulling data out of various platforms and loading them into different reporting tools is highly inefficient.

By putting all your data together, it is far easier to connect data from different sources. This will allow you to see data from your CRM with data from your marketing automation software in addition to any other data you collect.

Talk to your IT team about centralizing all your data in a data warehouse.

Your Report Building Toolbox

There are two options when it comes to analyzing data. Analyze it where it is, or move it somewhere else. We're going to talk through a few of the pros and cons of each approach.

Analyze It Where It Is:

SaaS companies have really stepped up their game when it comes to in-product analytics. And, the more things you use that product for, the more data you have at your fingertips.

WHO IS THIS FOR:

This is by far the easiest option. Smaller companies tend to have less data which means that there is probably less need to bring everything together. Additionally, in-product analytics is often the only option for marketing departments because anything else requires waiting for a report from IT. In-product analytics allows marketers to take control of their own reports.

CHAPTER 5: Use the right tools to gather and display your report



PROS:

If you want to analyze your marketing data, your marketing automation software can probably tell you everything you need to know about a campaign. Additionally, platforms generally come with reports that are pre-built for the data you collect in them. As we mentioned in Chapter 2, this is always a great place to start a new report! Looking for a great marketing automation software with killer reporting tools? [Check out HubSpot!](#)

CONS:

For the most part, you will only be able to analyze the data that you collect in that application. For example, some companies have complex and custom data sets that require more than two systems to report with. That may mean they are using WordPress with Google Analytics and HotJar, to get one number for average conversion rate on a page.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

[HubSpot has an incredibly robust in-product analytics](#) offering. Not only is the product powerful and easy to use, it is able to leverage your marketing and sales data because it is both a Marketing Automation Platform and a [CRM](#). With HubSpot analytics, you can track the complete customer lifecycle, from anonymous visitor to closed customer.

Move it Somewhere Else:

Can't put all your data together in-product or need advanced analytics capabilities? Looks like your data is going on an adventure. In this situation, Somewhere Else, could mean a myriad of places, but we're going to keep it to two - Excel & Analytics Tools.

MOVE IT TO EXCEL:

Excel is the tool for people who need to get stuff done on a low budget. Once you pull or copy the data you need, you're can analyze your raw data all you want -- assuming you know how.

PROS:

Once you have the data you need, you can slice and dice it in a million different ways and get rid of any data you don't want quickly. Additionally, with powerful functions like VLOOKUP and pivot tables, you can actually do a fair share of reporting.

CONS:

Excel is a spreadsheet tool. It is not specifically built for a marketing report. Once you have the data you want (no small feat), assuming it is still accurate, you are going to spend a lot of time cleaning your data and chasing equations from cell to cell and sheet to sheet.





Move it to an Analytics Tool:

There are a few analytics tools that marketers have come to rely on for giving us the reports we rely on. If you can get all the data you need in these tools, this is definitely your best option for creating meaningful reports and not spending an eternity in Excel.

WHO IS THIS FOR:

Implementing an analytics tool will probably require some help from IT. So, first and foremost, you have to have somebody that can help you get this thing up and running. Other than that, the best analytics tools are meant for everyone. They are designed to help people like marketers build the reports they need.

PROS:

These tools are made for analytics and reporting. They are designed to allow you to get the data you need, define the metrics you rely on, and do the analysis that moves you forward. They're also designed to build beautiful, accurate, repeatable reports. Most of them have dashboard capabilities, which makes combining different data, metrics and analysis together in one place super easy. They have lots of different options for visualizations — everything from bar, line, and pie charts to scatter plots and heatmaps.

If the tool is pulling from a centralized data store, they can also be a window into a world beyond marketing. Remember in chapter one where we discussed tying your work to revenue? These are the tools that will help you do that.

CONS:

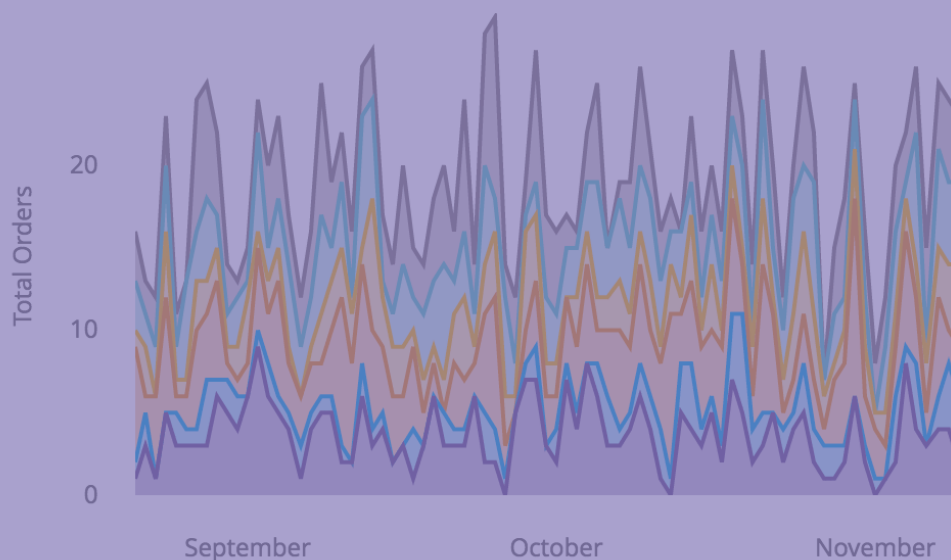
You have added another tool to your marketing stack. If you can implement it yourself, that is amazing, but you probably need the help (and approval) of IT. As with all tools, it will have its own interface and its own quirks. Lastly, these tools can be incredibly costly.

\$57.65

Average Order Profit

▲ \$2.94 vs last month

Orders by Day and Category



Customer Cohort

Order Month	2016-08	2016-09
Signup Month ^	Users	Users
2015-11		12
2015-12		24
2016-01		16

Need a great analytics tool? [Try Looker.](#)

The best analytics tool will allow you to build reports directly from that centralized data store. Looker is a data analytics platform that allows users to explore data on the fly and create meaningful reports. It has a pre-built marketing analytics block where you can track how leads are performing by:

- Easily determining overall campaign performance.
- Comparing leads from various lead sources and campaigns.
- Managing aggregate leads, cost, and how form fills are tracking to goal.

In this section we will talk about how you should go about putting the pieces that we have talked about together.

STEP ONE: WHAT QUESTION AM I TRYING TO ANSWER?

By this point, we've talked about how to define the question that a report can answer. We have also defined two levels of detail "where have the tickets we have sold gone" and "how have the tactics we used to sell those worked".

STEP TWO: FIND THE INDIVIDUAL ANSWERS

Regardless of how the report ends up being displayed, first we must find raw data to build the foundation of your report. If you are requesting data from IT, try to get the data in its rawest form so you only have to ask once. For this report we would ideally want a list of each registrant with the date they registered, their ticket type, and their origin. Lastly, we would need to know our referenceable numbers: how many tickets total, how many for each group, how long left to sell.

CHAPTER 6:

What is the best way to display your report?



STEP THREE: DISPLAY THE INDIVIDUAL ANSWERS

Every data, metric, or analysis is best suited for a different type of visualization. Here are a few recommendations for this report.

The first answer to this question lies in the ticket counts and the corresponding money. For highest impact, we recommend single value visualizations.

For understanding the mix of ticket types, you want something that can show percent of total, which is probably a pie or donut chart.

For knowing where people are coming from geographically, you'll want a map:

There's no single visualization that will work for every situation, but choosing the wrong type can leave your audience confused or misled. Remember that all the work you've done collecting and analyzing the data can be wasted if you don't present it well.

Need more help visualizing your data accurately? [Check out HubSpot's Data Visualization 101 guide.](#)

STEP 4: TELL YOUR STORY

At the end of the day, a well-made report should show the viewer the full picture of your efforts. Perhaps it's only the story of your web traffic, but still, there should be a narrative. You want to sort things in order of importance and then group things by general theme. Remember: if only one person will use a metric or it is not actionable, it should not be in your report.



CHAPTER 7:

How to use your report to plan for better results next month

A sure sign of a great report is that there is action to be taken from it. It needs to be high-level enough that it answers your questions, but detailed enough to be actionable.

Here are the top four things to make your reports actionable:

1. REPORT ON FAILURES:

The best way to improve is to know where you fell short. For example, say you're reporting on your web traffic for the month. First you might start by looking at the bounce rate on your site. After that, you would need to understand the why behind the rate you're seeing.

- Did you have a higher bounce rate because something isn't working right? For example, has the load time for the page gone up?
- Is it because messaging wasn't applicable to your target audience? Did users think they were getting something else when they landed on your page?

2. IF IT IS IMPORTANT, SLICE AND DICE IT A FEW WAYS:

There are very few metrics that can be traced back to one cause. For this reason, it is important to look at things from different angles. Traffic by day is a common thing to look at. If the number spikes, you want to know what caused it and more about that spike. Layering on things like percent new and form fills is important because it will give you a picture of the effect that spike had.

Because traffic by day is so important for a web analytics report, we will also want to break it down by channel, sources, and possibly by location. Key metrics like this need to be woven throughout your report to make sure you don't miss any chances for improvement.

3. DON'T TORTURE YOUR DATA

When you have a lot of data, you can filter, sort, and arrange it in ways that will tell almost any story you want. While this may seem tempting at times, it's not a good way to plan for better results. Let the data speak for itself, rather than trying to mold it to a preconceived story. In the long run, exposing the truth will do more for you than confirming your biases.

4. ALWAYS DIG DEEPER

While a great report will tell you what is going well or poorly, it shouldn't get too far into the nitty-gritty. As we mentioned in previously, anything in a report should be useful to more than one person. Do what you can to answer what you believe to be the question at hand and then give people the option to learn more.

If you are using an analytics tool, this may not be something you have to think about because drilling in will be a capability of the tool. If not, try to hyperlink any rolled up numbers to the source of the original detailed data.





How (exactly) will I do this next month?

Congratulations, you've now spent a great many hours putting this report together. It is beautiful, and in one month it will be obsolete. Here are a few tips for making sure you don't have to spend as many hours next month creating this report again:

PLAN AHEAD

You would hate to put in all this effort, only to have your boss come back saying they wanted something completely different. A simple 5-minute conversation before you start building the report can save you a world of frustration further down the road.

AUTOMATE

Anything that can be automated, should be automated. Automating any cleaning or normalizing you had to do of the data is a great example. When you find yourself changing data because of this or that idiosyncrasy, ask yourself if you can automate this update further up the data food-chain. Could we fix how the data is being entered? Do we need to adjust the process? If not, can we create programs in one of our platforms that changes the data for us?

Platforms like HubSpot allow you to schedule programs to run on a recurring basis. Think if any of your data normalization can be consistently identified and run nightly.

TOKENIZE

This is the key to saving yourself constant Excel analysis repeats. Do it once; do it right. It may turn out that there are only 20 data points feeding this report, so how can we build this thing so those are the only 20 cells we need to update? Cell references are your friends. But, as we mentioned in chapter four, it is important to document. Consider making a master sheet that explains the relationships between the different metrics so you can remember just how you thought things through the first time when you come back. This also allows you to share your master report builder with coworkers.

Need a helpful template for displaying reports? [Check out HubSpot's here.](#)

WORK WITH LIVE DATA WHERE YOU CAN

There are tools that allow you to connect directly to the live data. If you are able to build your report in one of these, you may be able to simply re-run your report every month to refresh the data.



CONCLUSION

Final Thoughts on Building Better Reports

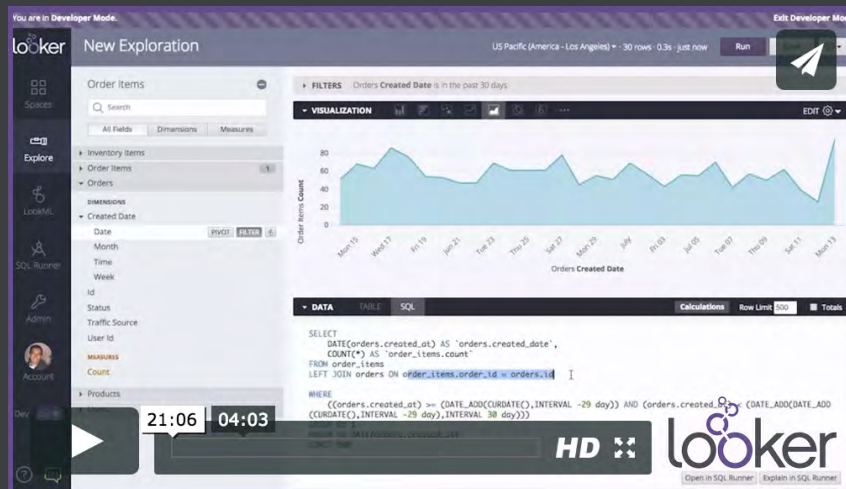
Building a strong report can be challenging, but doing so will certainly help you at the end of the day. As a way of reflecting on your current reporting processes, think about these three questions:

- Am I collecting the data I need?
- Am I looking at metrics and analysis that I can take action on?
- Am I measuring and displaying the information in the best way possible?

When you go to build your next report, remember to think about what you are going to do with the report and define the overarching question.

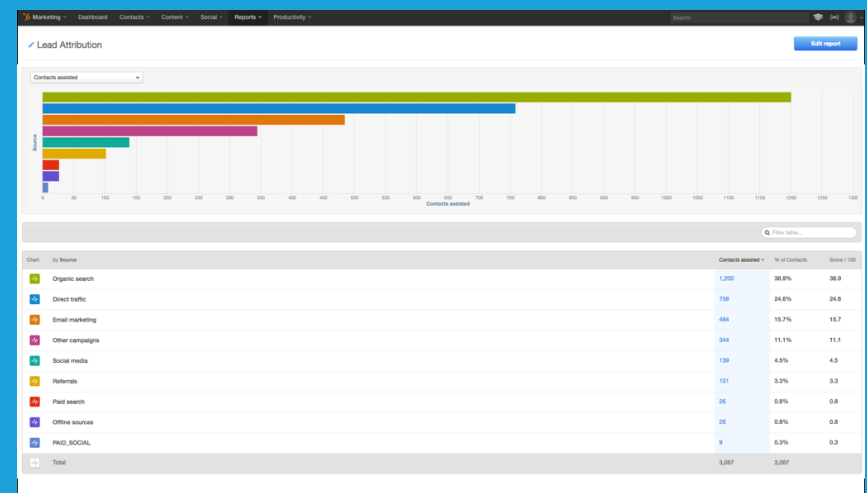
Want additional tips and help creating marketing reports? Looker and HubSpot would be happy to meet you again in personalized demo meetings.

Want a simpler way to track
and analyze your data?



Try Looker.

Measure your entire Marketing
Funnel in one place.



Check out HubSpot.